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ABSTRACT

The School District of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was ordered by the Commonwealth Court to begin a voluntary desegregation plan in February, 1979. To support the desegregation process, the school district applied for and received grants from the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) to develop programs around eight basic models: pairing, enrichment, middle school alternatives, music and art programs, multilingual/multicultural programs, student concerns, child development centers, and curriculum magnets. The desegregation plan showed success on several levels. Despite a declining enrollment and the closing of some schools, the number of desegregated students and schools continued to increase. Students, teachers, and parents had positive impressions of the desegregation programs with which they were associated. Student interpersonal and intergroup relations improved significantly, and over half of the students who had been in desegregation programs for 2 years maintained or improved their national percentile ranks in reading and mathematics. As more students continue to participate in voluntary desegregation programs, the school district should increase efforts to develop more attractive programs and to create integrated environments within the desegregated schools. (Author/MJL)

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Using Multiple Measures to Evaluate the Impact of Desegregation in a Large Urban School District

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A HISTORY OF DESEGREGATION EFFORTS IN PHILADELPHIA

The School District of Philadelphia officially initiated a Voluntary Desegregation Plan in February, 1979. The Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) provided federal funds to assist the School District in implementing a desegregation process which had its beginnings in Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court some eleven years earlier.

In February, 1968, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) ordered the School District to develop a plan to desegregate its schools. The PHRC is empowered by the state legislature to order school districts to desegregate. Pennsylvania law goes beyond federal statutes with respect to desegregation.

The PHRC need not prove willful intent on the district's part in order to take action. The presence of segregated schools is enough. If a school district's desegregation plan is not acceptable to the PHRC, the next step is Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court. Such was the case in Philadelphia.

On July 1, 1977, a Commonwealth Court judge ordered the Board of Education to "...proceed with the detailed development and implementation" of a voluntary desegregation plan. In so doing, the judge denied a plea from the Human Relations Commission that the School District provide a mandatory back-up plan should the voluntary effort not be successful.

Without any mandatory back-up, the judge agreed to give the School District a limited amount of time before reviewing its desegregation progress - until February, 1980. The 1977-1978 year was set aside for planning, with full implementation beginning September, 1978. Any time after the February, 1980 date, the PHRC could petition the court to take some mandatory action if it felt the School District was not making adequate voluntary progress.

Several PHRC recommendations for adding involuntary components to the plan were presented to the Board of Education during the Spring, 1980. They involved the mandatory pairings of some schools and the changing of some school feeder patterns. The Board elected not to modify its Voluntary Plan. As a result, the PHRC voted in June, 1980, to petition Commonwealth Court to force the School District to modify its strictly Voluntary Plan to include some mandatory components. Hearings were held in January, 1981. At this writing, no decision has been announced.

The Voluntary Plan did not begin in September, 1978 as originally planned. The Office of Civil Rights found the School District to be out of compliance with respect to the racial balance of its faculties. As a result, the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) grants, which were to supply the majority of funding for the voluntary plan, were withheld.

It took until February, 1979 to complete the transfer of nearly 3,000 teachers so that the programs could begin.

The School District is operating a Commonwealth Court approved Voluntary Desegregation Plan. Only school districts with court approved plans are eligible to apply for federal ESAA funds to assist in the desegregation process. In effect, there are two masters to please. The state approves the plan; the federal government assists in its financing.

For the Voluntary Desegregation Plan to be successful, parents and students must volunteer to attend schools so that racial isolation can be reduced.

Participating students receive free transportation to their new schools. The official Board policy permits voluntary transfers only if desegregation is promoted. Schools that are predominantly minority can only accept non-minority students. The reverse is true for predominantly non-minority schools. The School District's definition of a desegregated school is one in which the non-minority (white) population is between 25% and 75%.

Since the start of the Voluntary Desegregation Plan, the School District has applied for and received ESAA grants for Basic, Pilot, Magnet, Neutral Site Planning, and Other Special Projects.

Through the use of these funds, the School District developed programs around eight basic models: pairing, enrichment, middle school alternatives, music and art, multi-lingual/multi-cultural, student concerns, child development centers and special curriculum magnets.

Some programs were whole school, some served selected grades within a school, and some were in many schools. All programs and

projects were designed in the hope that they would attract the desegregated student populations that the PHRC insisted on, at a price the School District and ESAA budget officers were able to fund.

The 1981-1982 school year will be the final year for ESAA grants. As a result of recent Congressional decisions initiated by the Reagan administration, desegregation funding will be included in Block grants. In Pennsylvania, as in all other states, 20% of these dollars will go to the state department. The remaining 80% will be distributed throughout the state. Although there will be a governor's committee to assist in developing a formula for dispersing the funds, the School District will clearly not get its fair share. Every student in the state, be they in public, parochial or private school, will receive some assistance as a result of Block Grants.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DESEGREGATION PLAN

The evaluation unit participated in an intensive review of the existing conditions in all Philadelphia schools. The implementation of the voluntary plan required resources and assistance for problems incidental to the desegregation efforts.

Five basic problems were identified. These problems needed to be addressed in order for the School District to successfully participate in the Voluntary Desegregation Plan.

Problem 1. *If the plan is to be successful, students must be attracted to and retained in the schools to which they voluntarily transfer to achieve desegregation.*

Problem 2. *When students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds are brought together after years of racial isolation, there is a potential for friction and misunderstandings.*

Problem 3. Parents and children who are voluntarily enrolled in schools outside of their neighborhoods may feel isolated from the new school community. On the other hand, parents and children who live in and attend schools in their own neighborhoods may view the influx of children and parents of other races with some concern.

Problem 4. Teachers who have been transferred in order to achieve racial balance of school faculties may not be familiar with their new school community environment. In addition, where involuntary transfers have been instituted, teachers' attitudes may be less than positive.

Problem 5. Continuity of instruction may be negatively affected when students elect to transfer. If a transfer to achieve desegregation has a negative impact on the quality of education that students are entitled to receive, parents may be reluctant to permit their children to volunteer.

Each of the five problems basic to the implementation of the Voluntary Desegregation Plan may be reflected in a corresponding need.

Needs in Relation to Identified Problems

Need 1: There is a need for minority and non-minority students to voluntarily enroll in schools to advance the desegregation efforts.

Need 2: Pupils who have been racially isolated have the need to develop tolerance and understanding of the behaviors and personal beliefs of people of different backgrounds. Innovative activities and supportive services that will promote understanding among students of different races are therefore required.

Need 3: There is a need to reduce parent/community fears and apprehensions about voluntary desegregation.

Need 4: Teachers need to implement new curricula as specified by the activities within the Basic Grant and they need to instruct children who have previously been racially isolated.

Need 5: There is a need to ameliorate the discrepancy between students enrolled in minority isolated schools and those that are in predominantly non-minority schools in terms of achievement, attainment rates, attendance, and other student concerns (i.e., suspension, expulsion).

Objectives in Relation to Identified Needs

Each need is reflected in a corresponding objective which is evaluated by the Desegregation Evaluation Unit.

The objectives and their evaluation are logical extensions of the needs and problems:

PROBLEM ⟶ NEED ⟶ OBJECTIVE ⟶ EVALUATION

On the individual school or project level, each objective is stated in terms of an evaluation question. The evaluation of the voluntary desegregation plan seeks answers to five questions:

1. *Are students volunteering so that schools become desegregated?*
2. *Do the students get along with each other in their new schools?*
3. *Are parents involved and informed?*
4. *Are teachers and other staff receiving the necessary training so that the programs are properly implemented?*
5. *Has the desegregation plan affected students' achievement in basic skills?*

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Are students volunteering so that schools become desegregated?

The number of students exposed to a desegregated experience continued to increase. In spite of the drop in enrollment and the closing of some schools, an additional 1961 students were desegregated since the Spring 1981 (April) update of the Pupil Directory. Currently, there are 82 desegregated schools (between 25% and 75% white); 30.4% of the district's schools and 30.1% of the district's students are considered desegregated.

During 1976-1977, the year prior to Commonwealth Court's approval of the voluntary plan, there were 47 desegregated schools serving 40,171 students. Since that time, 35 more schools have desegregated, with 24,171 more students exposed to a desegregated experience. These data are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

The School District's enrollment has declined by 10,359 students since the Fall 1980 (October) update of the Pupil Directory. This year's fall update was delayed by two months due to a teachers strike. The racial distribution of students from 1980 to 1981 is shown below:

Date	Total Enrollment	Amer. Ind. Number	Amer. Ind. Pct.	Black Number	Black Pct.	Asian Number	Asian Pct.	Hispanic Number	Hispanic Pct.	White Number	White Pct.
Dec. 81	213,980	105	0.0	134,272	62.7	4,090	1.9	16,247	7.6	59,266	27.7
Oct. 80	224,339	117	0.1	140,432	62.6	3,319	1.5	15,971	7.1	64,500	28.8

In terms of actual numbers, the Asian and Hispanic populations have increased. Black, White and American Indian populations have decreased. Overall, the School District's minority enrollment decreased by 5,125 students; the proportion of minority students increased by 1.1%. The School District's white enrollment decreased by 5,234 students; the proportion of white students decreased by 1.1%. The White enrollment itself dropped by 8.1%.

2. Do the students get along with each other in their new schools?

A stratified random sample of desegregated classrooms was selected for administration of the Classroom Perception Inventory. This instrument has been used successfully as a measure of cross-racial friendships.

Students were asked three questions:

1. Who are your best friends?
2. Who in this class would you like to work with on a project?
3. If you were going to be working on a project with other children, there might be some children you would not want to have in your group. Who are those children?

There were no significant differences in the number of cross-racial choices for questions one and two. There was a significant difference in the number of cross-racial choices for question three. Minority students excluded significantly fewer non-minority students. Non-minority students excluded significantly fewer minority students. This was considered to be a positive measure of how well students were getting along with each other.

In the Magnet high schools, students completed a questionnaire designed to measure racial tolerance and understanding, as well as feelings about the magnet program. Results were generally positive. Selected statements follow:

- Teachers at this school make the difference in my learning - 75.6% agreed or strongly agreed.
- People really care about me at this school - 73.0% agreed or strongly agreed.
- In this school I have an opportunity to interact with many different types of people of other races - 89.5% agreed or strongly agreed.
- I would choose to come to this school again - 80.3% agreed or strongly agreed.
- My understanding of other people and other races has improved this year - 80.1% agreed or strongly agreed.

- I like the friends I've made at this school as much as my old friends - 82.6% agreed or strongly agreed.

- I feel that school desegregation is important - 77.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

- I enjoy working with others of a different racial background - 86.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

3. Are parents involved and informed?

A two percent random sample of students in all desegregation programs, was generated from the Pupil Directory Information File. Parents were phoned during July and August, 1981 by members of the Desegregation Evaluation Unit. Selected results follow:

- 77.2% of parents surveyed knew their child's school was a part of the Voluntary Desegregation Plan.
- 68.0% of the parents surveyed visited their child's school this past year.
- Parents had an average of between 4 and 6 contacts with their child's school this past year.
- Parents were more likely to discuss their child's progress in school, and how well they were getting along with other children than they were to discuss transportation problems or school building facilities.
- 91.4% of parents surveyed were satisfied with the contacts they had with the schools this past year.
- Of all parents surveyed whose children did not attend their neighborhood schools,

  15.7% volunteered for desegregation purposes only,

  45.1% wanted their children to attend the particular program offered in the school (with desegregation secondary),

  21.6% were dissatisfied with their former neighborhood schools,

  and

  17.6% volunteered to attend their new schools because a family member or friend already attended the school.
- 95.8% of parents surveyed felt the school staff cared about their children.
- 77.8% of parents surveyed first learned about their school's program from the school counselor, family or friends. Only 22.2% heard about the program from the Media (radio, TV, or newspapers), or flyers from the school.

- 94.8% of the parents surveyed believed their children were learning things that were important to them.
- 94.7% of the parents surveyed wanted to see the program continue.
- 94.7% of the parents surveyed would recommend the program to their family, friends or neighbors.

4. Are teachers and other staff receiving the necessary training so that the programs are properly implemented?

All ESAA funded teachers were surveyed in June, 1981 in order to determine their perceptions about the implementation of the desegregation program in their schools, and the appropriateness of their staff development sessions. Selected results follow:

- 64.6% of the teachers felt that successful desegregation is as dependent on the schools physical location as it is on the program itself.
- 73.9% of the teachers felt that there are not enough channels for communicating concerns and experiences among teachers in desegregation programs throughout the district.
- 87.7% of the teachers were satisfied with the academic progress their students made in the program.
- 89.3% of the teachers were satisfied with the progress their students made in the areas of interpersonal and intergroup relations.
- 98.5% of the teachers felt their principal was supportive of the desegregation program.
- 72.3% of the teachers agreed that the staff development sessions they attended were well planned and presented.
- Teachers felt they could use more inservice in the area of intergroup relations than in the areas of curriculum, teaching methods, or classroom management.
- 35.3% of the teachers felt there was a high degree of parental involvement in the program.

5. How has the desegregation plan affected students' achievement?

All students in the School District are tested in basic skills as part of the regular citywide testing program. Students enrolled in desegregation programs for two consecutive test administrations (February, 1980 - February, 1981) were expected to maintain or improve their national percentile ranking in reading and mathematics as measured by the California Achievement Tests.

Of 4,440 students tested in Total Reading in February 1980 who were tested again in the same school in February 1981, 55.5% maintained or improved their national percentile rank.

Of 3,670 students tested in Total Mathematics in February 1980 who were tested again in the same school in February 1981, 55.6% maintained or improved their national percentile rank.

CONCLUSIONS

The School District's Voluntary Desegregation Plan has been successful. In spite of a declining enrollment, the number of students exposed to a desegregated experience continues to increase. The percentage of students and schools now desegregated has nearly doubled.

Students, teachers and parents were all positive about the desegregation programs with which they were associated. Elementary students excluded significantly fewer children of the opposite race from free choice work groups over the course of the school year.

High school students expressed strong agreement that their understanding of students of other races improved during 1980-1981.

Nearly 95% of parents surveyed wanted to see their child's desegregation program continue.

Nearly 90% of teachers surveyed were satisfied with the progress their students made in the areas of interpersonal and intergroup relations.

Of all students in desegregation programs for two consecutive years, 55% maintained or improved their national percentile ranks in reading and mathematics.

The School District, even in times of shrinking resources, should continue to develop the kinds of programs that attract students and their parents. Efforts should be directed towards developing integrated environments within the desegregated schools. The need for this type of activity, as more and more students continue to volunteer, cannot be discounted.

TABLE 1

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS: OCTOBER 1976 TO DECEMBER 1981

Year	# of Schools	Total Enrollment	# of Deseg. Schools	# Pupils	Desegregated % Schools	% Pupils
Dec. 81	270	213,980	82	64,342	30.4	30.1
April 81	287	224,000	84	62,38[illegible]	29.3	27.8
Oct. 80	287	224,339	79	62,063	27.5	27.7
April 80	287	230,252	70	51,604	24.4	22.4
Oct. 79	287	232,328	68	51,699	23.7	22.3
April 79	292	241,266	66	48,783	22.6	20.2
Oct. 78	289	244,723	59	46,923	20.6	19.2
April 78	289	252,139	56	43,413	18.7	17.2
Oct. 77	294	250,932	54	43,593	18.4	17.4
1976-1977*	292	257,942	47	40,171	16.1	15.6

*ESAA base year - Year prior to implementation of plan

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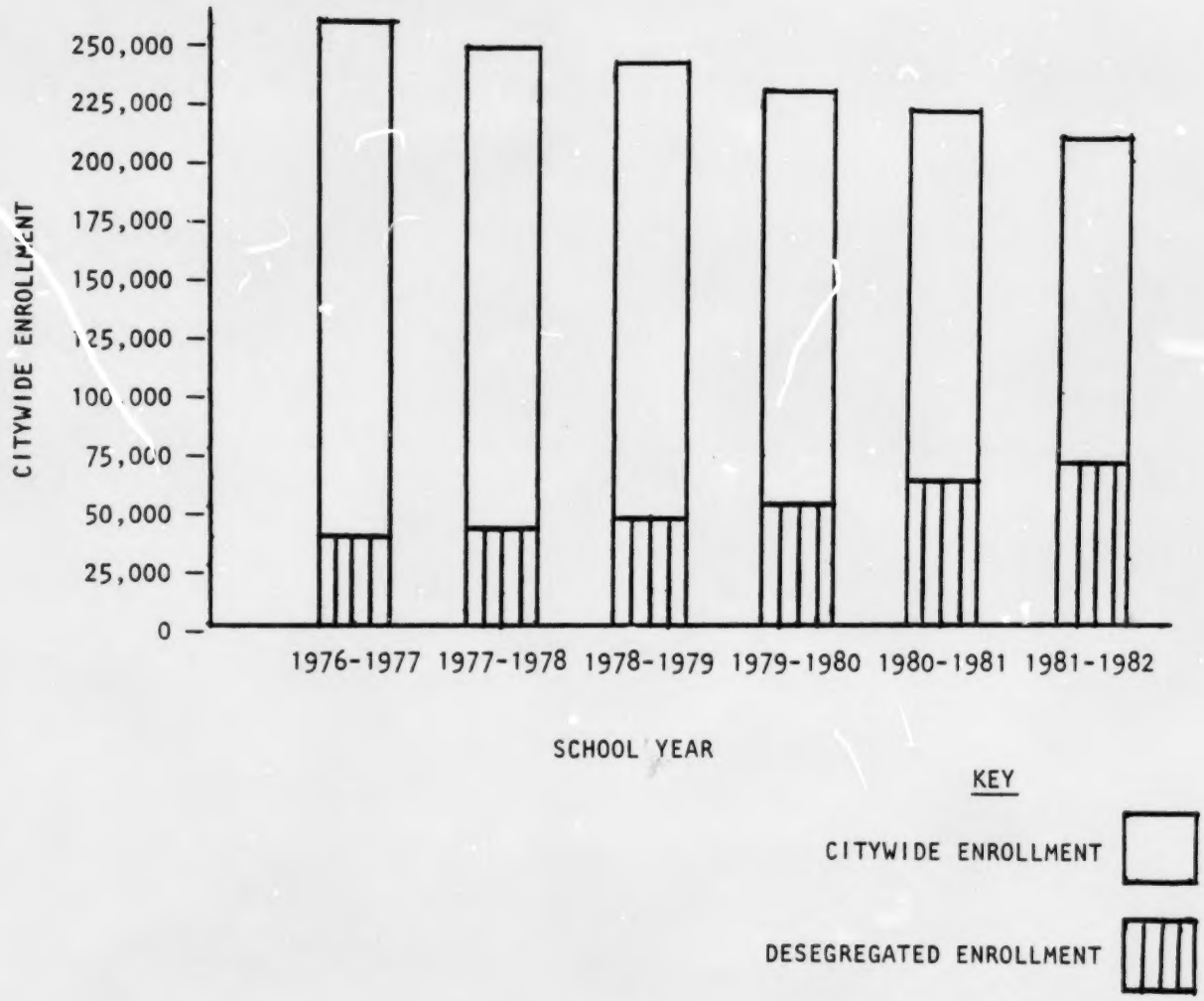
FIGURE 1

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS EXPOSED TO A DESEGREGATED EXPERIENCE FROM 1976-1977 TO 1981-1982



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